UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center
Twentynine Palms, California

AIR TASKING ORDER/CONFIRMATION MESSAGE
OFFICER STUDENT HANDOUT

3.18
JUN 01

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE: In the classroom and without aid
of references, pass written tests encompassing lectures 1.01
through 4.05 with a score of 80% or greater. (7208.109.1)

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE(S):

1. Select from a list of options, the purpose for the ATO 98
message, without the aid of but in accordance with the
reference. (7208.109.1ge)

2. Given a list of ATO 98 sets in column A, match each set
with the correct type of information found within it listed in
column B, without the aid of but in accordance with the
reference. (7208.109.1gf)

3. Select from a list of options the purpose of the Radio
In/Out (RIO) log, without the aid of but in accordance with
the reference. (7208.109.1gg)

I. Introduction. The purpose of this lesson is to
familiarize you with the Air Tasking Order/Confirmation
(ATO 98) message and how it is utilized in the Direct Air
Support Center.

II. ATO 98

    A. General. The Air Tasking Order (ATO) is the
document that provides all the detailed information for
aviation missions during an exercise or operation. The Air
Tasking Order Confirmation (ATO 98) message is simply the
Air Tasking Order in USMTF message format. The ATO 98 is
the message that Marines working in the Direct Air Support
Center will be exposed to the most in the Fleet Marine
Force.

    B. Purpose. The purpose of the ATO 98 message is to
task intra- service organizations with air missions, to

inform the requesting command and the tasking authority of the action being taken and/or to provide additional information about the mission(s). In other words, it is a way to task aviation units with specific missions on a given period of time in an exercise or operation.

III. ATO Components: A Message Map for ATO 98. One of the main components of a message is the set. ATO 98 has 73 sets. Although four of them were covered in the USMTF class, the following example will describe in some detail, those particular to the ATO 98. Also, the following alpha characters will be used: (m) mandatory, (o) operational/optional, (r) repeatable and (c) conditional.

    A. AMPN (Amplification)(c), NARR (Narrative)(c) and RMKS (Remarks)(c). The first three sets are AMPN, NARR and RMKS. These can be referred to as free text sets. Each of them follow different rules with regards to free-text information. AMPN provides amplification about another set and should be placed right after the set it amplifies. NARR provides a narrative and is used to talk about two or more sets, and should be placed right after the last set it refers to. There may be more than one of each of these sets in the message, but there won't be more than one in a row. RMKS is also a free text set, but is used to talk about the entire message. There will only be one RMKS and it should be placed immediately preceding the DECL set which is the last set of the message. For the following example, the AMPN refers to one reference set. It simply says Reference A was created by students at MCCES, NARR talks about Refs A and B and RMKS talks about the entire message.

SET/FIELD NAMES: AMPN/free text set//
               NARR/free text set//
               RMKS/free text set//

EXAMPLE: **AMPN**/REFERENCE A WAS CREATED BY STUDENTS AT MCCES//   **NARR**/REFERENCES A AND B MUST BE USED WHEN READING THIS   MESSAGE//
      RMKS/THIS MESSAGE IS PART OF A TRAINING EXERCISE FOR THE STUDENTS AT MCCES//

    B. CANX (Cancel)(o,r). The CANX set is used to cancel previous messages and report any new information. For our example, we are canceling an ATO 98 message sent out by MCCES at 1800 on 25 DEC 96. The serial number is 2509002.

It is NOTAL, meaning Not Provided To All Concerned, and the filing number is ABC. It may also have said PASEP or Passed Separately.

CANX/(usmtf short title) or (type of reference)/ originator/date-time group/(message) or (document) serial number/special notation(PASEP or NOTAL)/(sic) or (filing number)//

CANX/ATO 98/MCCES/251800ZDEC96/2509002/NOTAL/ABC//

C. PERID (Effective Time Period)(m). The next set is PERID. It provides the effective time period of the message. The example states it is effective from 0000 on the 12th to 2359 on the 12th and as of 2300 on the 11th. So it is good for a twenty-four hour period.

PERID/time from/TO: time to/ASOF: as of time//

PERID/120000Z/TO:122359Z/ASOF:112300Z//

D. AIRTASK (Air Tasking)(m). The next set is the AIRTASK.   It indicates Air Tasking or how the missions will be tasked and includes any additional comments. For this example, the tasking will be by units, however, they could also be tasked many other categories such as package or even specific mission type.

AIRTASK/air tasking/air tasking comments//

AIRTASK/UNIT TASKING//

E. TASKUNIT (Unit Tasked)(m). The next set is the TASKUNIT. This specifies the aviation unit tasked to support the mission(s). This set will appear anytime a new unit is tasked with a mission. For this example the unit is 3rd MAW out of Miramar.

TASKUNIT/tasked unit designator/location/comments//

TASKUNIT/3RDMAW/MIRAMAR//

F. AMSNDAT (Mission Data)(m). The next set is AMSNDAT. As you read the ATO 98 message, this set will delineate between missions. The exceptions will be if a new unit is being tasked (TASKUNIT) or another type of

tasking is identified (AIRTASK). The AMSNDAT set gives
basic tasking/confirmation information for air missions.
For this example, the mission # is 1001M. The (-) is the
"no data" symbol which means that the given field does not
apply for this mission. In this case, there is no package
identifier because it doesn't belong to a package.
Continuing on his callsign is Spitfire, Number & Type A/C
is 2 AV8B and his mission is XCAS (Airborne Alert). The
alert field is left blank because his alert status is
Airborne alert. Finally, he is carrying Standard
Conventional Load (SCL) 01 Pri - 02 Sec, and the IFF/SIF
modes and codes are 21001 and 21002.

        AMSNDAT/mission number/package
identifier/aircraft call sign/number and type
aircraft/mission type/alert status/primary configuration
code/secondary configuration code/iff-sif mode and code//

        AMSNDAT/1001M/-/SPITFIRE/2AV8B/XCAS/-/MA01/MA02/
21001/21002//

    Now that we know who he is, we need to know where he is
going and what is he doing. The next four sets will give
us that information. They are AMSNLOC, GTGTLOC and segment
RECDATA and PTRCPLOT. Only one of the first three will be
in the message because only one is needed.

    G. AMSNLOC (Mission Location)(c,r). AMSNLOC gives us
basic mission location information. This is normally used
if the mission doesn't have a preplanned target assigned,
or if it is flying some other type of airborne mission
other than reconnaissance such as Defensive Counter Air
(DCA), Combat Air Patrol (CAP), Forward Air Controller
(Airborne) [FAC(A)], or airborne CAS (XCAS). For our
example the mission will run from 1500 - 1700 on the 12th
at point Chevy at 15,000 feet. It is used if GTGTLOC and
RECCEDAT-PTRCPLOT aren't used.

        AMSNLOC/mission start day-time/mission stop day-
time/mission location name/ALT: (altitude) or (flight
level)/air support request number/area coordinates//

        AMSNLOC/121500Z/121700Z/CHEVY/ALT: 150//

    H. GTGTLOC (Target Location)(o,r). The next set is
the GTGTLOC. This identifies the information about a
specific target. This is where you find the times of the

4

mission and the location of the target(s). For this
example, the mission is scheduled from 1200-1300 on the
12th, the target number is B1001 and is a Regimental
Command and Control Facility located at 3639.7N 12942.5E.
The air support request number given this mission is 123B.
It will be used when AMSNLOC and RECCEDAT-PTRCPLOT aren't
used.

     GTGTLOC/day-time on target/day-time off target/
target identifier/target type/desired mean point of
impact/air support request number/target comments//

     GTGTLOC/121200Z/121300Z/B1001/ICOMM/3639.7N
12942.5E/ 123B/REGIMENT COMMAND AND CONTROL FACILITY//

   I. RECCEDAT (Reconnaissance Data)(o,r). The next set
is RECCEDAT. This provides the mission location
information for reconnaissance missions. In this example,
the request number is 8AA001, Priority 1 with a TOT of 1500
on the 12th. The LTIOV is DEC 13 96 at 1500. The LTIOV is
that day/time at which the information is no longer of
value to the individual/unit who requested the
reconnaissance mission initially. It is flying a photo
mission covering a route. Its imagery type will be Best
Possible (BP) with the qualifier of Black and White (B).
Its coverage extent mode is (A) which is Complete/full
stereo. The target code is 3 (Bridges) and category is
ABCDEF. The print scale is 1000 and should be delivered to
I MEF. Most of the information found in RECCEDAT is for
the aircrew, however, you still should be able to recognize
what the information in each field is referring to.

     RECCEDAT/request number/PRY: mission
priority/day-time on target/LTIOV: latest time information
is of value/recon mission type/coverage type/imagery
type/IMQ: image qualifier/CM: coverage extent/TGTCOD: recon
target code/print scale/delivery address//

     RECCEDAT/8AA001/PRY: 1/121500Z/LTIOV:
9612131500Z/ PHOTO/ROUTE/BP/IMQ: B/CM: A/TGTCOD:
3ABCDEF/1000/I MEF//

   J. PTRCPLOT(Identifies Recon Location)(o,r). This set
is a follow on to RECCEDAT. It gives the specific location
for the reconnaissance mission. In this example, the
mission will follow the coordinates listed. RECCEDAT and
PTRCPLOT are used only if AMSNLOC and GTGTLOC aren't used.

PTRCPLOT/location of initial point/trace point location//

PTRCPLOT/DE25262695/DE39753510/DF29165234//

K. CONTROLA (Control)(o,r). The next set is CONTROLA. It identifies information on specific controlling agencies. Most missions don't just fly out to their target and drop their bombs. They must be controlled. This is very important because it will identify if the DASC will control the mission or not. For this example, the type of control is OTR, meaning you must refer to a Free text set to identify who the controller is. In this case the AMPN set identifies the Marine DASC as control for this mission. The callsign is "COOKHOUSE" on primary frequency designator Bronze and secondary Purple. The CONTROLA set also provides the report-in point or contact point (FORD) and any special instructions the aircrew may need in order to check in (Report Msn #, present position and altitude).

CONTROLA/type of control/call sign/primary (frequency) or (frequency designator)/secondary (frequency) or (frequency designator)/report-in point/control comments//

CONTROLA/OTR/COOKHOUSE/BRONZE/PURPLE/FORD/REPORT MSN #, CURRENT POSITION AND ALTITUDE//
AMPN/MARINE DASC WILL CONTROL THIS MISSION//

L. FACINFOR (Forward Air Controller Info)(o,r). The next set is the FACINFOR. This set provides information about the Forward Air Controller (FAC) assigned to a given mission. This set identifies the callsign and frequency of the FAC who will provide control of the aircraft into the target. With this information, the DASC will be able to hand over control of the aircraft to the appropriate terminal controller. This set also identifies the supported unit, and any other comments the aircrew must consider. In this example, the FAC is Renegade on frequencies 345.2/290.4, and the aircrew should contact him at Laura. This mission is in support of 2nd Battalion, and the pilot should refer to the Pilot Controller Handbook for further control issues.

FACINFOR/callsign/primary (frequency) or (frequency designator)/secondary (frequency) or (frequency

designator)/ report-in point/support unit identity/control comments//

       FACINFOR/RENEGADE/345.2/290.4/LAURA/2BN/SEE PILOT CONTROLLER HANDBOOK//

    M. <u>ELECMBT (Electronic Combat Aircraft)(o,r)</u>. The ELECMBT set will <u>identify the electronic combat mission</u> (if any) in support of an assault mission. In this example, Raven 11, a priority 1A mission, will provide ELECMBT support. The aircraft will be located at Dolphin at 15,000 feet from 1500-1900 on the 12th, and will operate on frequencies Purple and Silver.

       ELECMBT/aircraft call sign/priority/mission location/ ALT: (altitude)/time on station/time off station/primary (frequency) or (frequency designator)/secondary (frequency) or (frequency designator)//

       ELECMBT/RAVEN 11/1A/DOLPHIN/ALT: 150/121500Z/121900Z/
PURPLE/SILVER//

    N. <u>REFUEL (Mission Aircraft Refueling Info)(o,r)</u>. The next set is REFUEL. This gives the <u>mission refueling information</u> <u>to the aircraft being refueled</u>. This example we have SUMO 10, MSN # 5010M, flying refueling track Shell at 35,000 feet. This mission will need to refuel around 1600 and will require a total off-load of 25,000 lbs of fuel for his mission. The tanker, SUMO 10, will be on frequencies 352.1/324.7 for pri/sec.

       REFUEL/tanker call sign/tanker mission number/air refueling control point/ALT: (altitude) or (flight level)/air refueling control time/total off-load of fuel/primary (frequency) or (frequency designator)/secondary (frequency) or (frequency designator)//

       REFUEL/SUMO 10/5001M/SHELL/ALT: 350/121600Z/25/352.1/ 324.7//

    O. <u>7REFUEL (Tanker Aircraft Information on Missions Refueling)(o)</u>. The next set is 7REFUEL. This set provides <u>information to tanker aircrews conducting the aerial refueling</u> regarding missions they are scheduled to support.

For our example, the tanker mission will refuel two missions.

7REFUEL

/MSNNO	/ACSIGN	/NOTPAC	/OFF	/ARCT	/TNKR	/FUEL	/CMNT
Mission Number	aircraft callsign	number and type/ model of aircraft	total off-load fuel	air refueling control time	tanker assignment	refueling fuel type	receiver comments

7REFUEL

MSNNO	/ACSIGN	/NOTPAC	/OFF	/ARCT	/TNKR	/FUEL	/CMNT
/1001M /6011M	/SPITFIRE 01 /RAVEN 11	/2 AV8B /4 EA6B	/ 25 / 35	/121600 Z /121700 Z	/ 3 / 1,2	/JP5 // /JP5 //	

P. AKNLDG (Acknowledgement)(o). The AKNLDG set is used when an acknowledgment of receipt is required by the sender. In this example, 3rd MAW is required to acknowledge receipt of the message.

AKNLDG/acknowledgement/(INST: instructions) or force or unit required to acknowledge)//

AKNLDG/YES/3RD MAW//

Q. DECL (Declassification)(o). The last set in the ATO 98 is the DECL set. This set provides instructions for downgrading or declassification the original message. This example requires that the message not be downgraded or declassified without notification from the originating agency, or "Originating Agency's Determination Required" (OADR).

DECL/downgrading instructions//

DECL/OADR//

R. Additional Information. Sets PERID, AIRTASK, TASKUNIT, and AMSNDAT are mandatory. However, only one AMSNLOC, GTGTLOC, and RECCEDAT set may be used. You must use set AMSNLOC if set GTGTLOC on the segment RECCEDAT and PTRCPLOT are not used. You must use set GTGTLOC if set

AMSNLOC or segment RECCEDAT and PTRCPLOT is not used. Use segment RECCEDAT and PTRCPLOT if sets AMSNLOC or GTGTLOC are not used.

S. Entry Lists. The ATO 98 uses the following entry lists. The lists themselves are provided to give you an idea and reference for examples of what can be listed in each field. They are located in Chapters 4 & 5 of the JUH-MTF and also in Section 3 of your Supplemental Handout.

LIST NUM	TITLE
11	Location
20	Target Type
107A	Mission Type
178	Reconnaissance Type
513	Aircraft Type
564A	Sensor Position
595	Target Identifier
2005	Air Tasking Type

IV. Radio In/Out (RIO) Log. The RIO log is simply a method to present the information found in the ATO 98 message. It is commonly referred to as a "soft frag." It allows controllers to chronologically list and track the missions as they are executed. It has 12 individual blocks.

MSN:	The mission number.
CALLSIGN:	The a/c callsign.
NO/TYPE:	Number and type of a/c.
MISSION:	The a/c mission.
ORD:	Ordnance.
ETA:	Estimated Time Airborne.
ATA:	Actual Time Airborne.
ETR:	Estimated Time of Return.
ATR:	Actual Time of Return.

CONTROL: Who has control of the mission.
           FREQ: The control frequency.
           REMARKS: Any additional information the
controller needs in order to control
the aircraft, e.g., routing.

V.   ATO Cycle. Just like anything else we do in the
military, things don't just happen. During an exercise or
operation, an ATO doesn't just magically appear.
Additionally, rarely will there be just one ATO. There
will at least be two, one being planned and one being
executed but depending on the size of the operation there
may be more. There are several steps that must take place
in order for an ATO to go from its initiation to its
execution. There are seven basic steps or phases in the
ATO Cycle: Joint Targeting, Approval, Target Weaponeering,
Master Air Attack Plan, ATO Production, Execution and
Assessment. We will go into much more detail at a later
date.

REFERENCE(S):
NAVMC 2800, Joint Users Handbook for Message Text Format
(JUH-MTF)
MCWP 3-25.5, Direct Air Support Center Handbook